

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) toured the Cortland Care Center and met with residents and staff to discuss legislation he recently introduced in Congress. Arcuri's bill would provide nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and hospices with resources to upgrade fire detection and suppression equipment to ensure the safety of their residents.

"The Cortland Care Center provides critical skilled nursing care and services to local seniors," **said Arcuri, a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus**

. "The legislation I have introduced in Congress will help local facilities like Cortland Care upgrade and expand fire detection and prevention systems through a competitive federal grant program. With new regulations to improve fire safety in nursing homes scheduled to come into effect, it is vital that we ensure local facilities have the resources they need to upgrade and expand fire safety systems."

Arcuri's legislation, the Long-Term Care Life Safety Act (H.R. 2882), would establish a competitive grant program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to promote professional retrofit installation of fire detection systems and fire prevention technologies in nursing homes, hospice centers, and assisted living facilities.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 2,800 fires are reported per year in nursing homes — or roughly one for every six nursing homes. Approximately 60% of skilled nursing facilities in New York were built in the 1960s and the 1970s. Although virtually all facilities in New York are at least partially covered by fire sprinklers, many facilities fall short of the "fully sprinklered" definition which will be employed by the federal government within the next five years. H.R. 2882 would allow facilities access to federal funding to upgrade fire prevention systems and meet new requirements.

H.R.2882 also directs HHS to give priority consideration to facilities that demonstrate a "need or hardship" to ensure that older facilities receive assistance first.

"As an administrator for a long term care facility, the safety of the residents and staff is my highest priority," **said Marc Walker, Administrator of the Cortland Care Center**. "I applaud Congressman Arcuri's efforts to retain funding for the installation of sprinkler systems. The bill HR 2882 would provide the necessary funding for older facilities to meet the standard. I thank

Congressman Arcuri for his perseverance and his recognition of the need of capital funding in order to meet the new requirements.”

The Cortland Care Center is a 120 bed skilled nursing facility with short term, long term, and memory care facilities.

“I would like to thank Representative Arcuri for introducing this legislation,” **said Loie Leopardi, Vice Chair of the New York State Health Facilities Association**

. “It will be extremely difficult for many nursing facilities to upgrade their sprinkler systems to have their buildings fully sprinklered without HR 2882. We all believe it will provide our residents a higher level of safety. We thank Representative Arcuri for recognizing the need and providing an avenue for funding for many financially challenged facilities.”

In the 24th Congressional District, there are 90 assisted living centers, 12 hospice and palliative care centers, and 42 nursing homes.

Arcuri introduced H.R. 2882 in June, and the bill was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee. H.R.2882 would authorize \$40 million for each fiscal year 2008 through 2012. Regulations would be developed by HHS, and funding would be subject to the annual appropriations process.

Fire prevention and suppression equipment that could be installed with grant funding include: smoke detectors, automatic sensors, fire sprinklers, automatic suppression systems, and other technologies approved by the National Fire Protection Association.

H.R. 2882 has been endorsed by the following organizations:

National Fire Protection Association
National Burglar and Fire Alarm Association
NYS Burglar and Fire Alarm Association
Assisted Living Federation of America
National Center for Assisted Living
National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
New York State Health Facilities Association
Alliance for Quality Nursing Home Care

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